

REMARKS

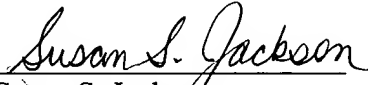
Applicants have canceled claim 151 and incorporated the subject matter of claim 151 into currently amended claims 145 and 164. Applicants have also amended claims 145 and 164 to include the subject matter of page 6, lines 4-5 of the specification. Applicants have also amended claim 154 to be consistent with the current amendments to claim 145. No new matter has been added.

On page 2 of the Office Action, claims 145-151, 153, 155 and 157-166 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Osborn, III et al., U.S. Patent No. 5,647,862 in view of Meirowitz et al. (WO 9604876A1). According to the rejection, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art to have used the bundle of Meirowitz as the absorbent directional strip of Osborn to better transport fluids in a direction and to orient the fluid direction layer and perforate it at desired locations in order to direct fluid to particular applications in a given absorbent application. Applicants contend that Meirowitz does not teach or suggest the present invention since in Meirowitz there has to be a capillary size gradient that is created by separating the fibers in a first zone and forming a tight bundle in at least a second zone away from the first zone. Applicants further contend that Meirowitz does not teach or suggest a bundle having a Specific Volume greater than 4.0 cc/gm and a Maximum Potential Flux (MPF_B) greater than or equal to 0.14 cc/(den*hr) as in the present invention. In fact, Applicants submit that the fibers in the bundles of Meirowitz produce low specific volume bundles and bundles with low MPF_B. Thus, in contrast, the bundles of the present invention are particularly advantageous in that they provide a significantly improved acquisition/distribution system over

the cited references. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection.

In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully urged that the present claims are in condition for allowance and reconsideration is requested. An early notice to this effect is earnestly solicited. Should there be any questions regarding this application, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the number shown below.

Respectfully submitted,


Susan S. Jackson
Customer No. 021878
Kennedy Covington Lobdell & Hickman, L.L.P.
Hearst Tower, 47th Floor
214 North Tryon Street
Charlotte, NC 28202
(704) 331-7410

Enclosures:
Petition for One Month Extension of Time